

Foreign Policy: Congressman's SOTU Guests are parents banned from Russian adoption

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At Tuesday's State of the Union address, a New York congressman will host a couple whose plans to adopt an orphan were thwarted when the Russian parliament banned all American adoptions last December.

Dania and Nick Marvos, a couple from Little Neck, NY, were in the process of adopting a little boy from Russia when Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law banning American adoptions of Russian children last December. The couple had traveled to Russia in December to meet their prospective child, a one-year-old boy named Ari, but now their hopes of bringing Ari to the United States are all but lost.

"Waiting for news to see if we will be allowed to bring our baby home has been one of the most trying times in our lives. Devastating does not capture the emotional roller coaster that we are enduring every day," Dania Mavros said in a statement. "We try to keep our spirits up with the hope that our family will be united and our beautiful little boy does not have to grow up in an orphanage without the love of his Mommy and Daddy who are waiting for him in the United States."

The couple will be the guests of Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY), their congressman, who has been working both in public and private to help them finish the adoption process they began, despite the new law. The lawmaker and the couple held a press conference on the issue last month in Queens.

"President Putin is jeopardizing the future for thousands of Russian orphans and their adoptive parents here in the U.S. over a political disagreement with the administration," Israel said in a press release. "The adoption process is difficult enough for any family without adding international politics to the mix. Children should never be used as political pawns, but in this case that is exactly what's happening. "

The anti-adoption law passed Russia's upper house of parliament unanimously and was widely seen as retaliation for a new U.S. law that punishes Russian human rights violators by restricting their access to visas and their ability to do business in the United States. That bill, the Sergei Magnitsky Accountability and Rule of Law Act of 2012, was named after the Russian anti-corruption lawyer who died in prison, allegedly after being tortured by Russian officials. State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said in December that the Russian bill would needlessly result in the suffering of the most vulnerable Russian orphans, who bear no responsibility for the political feud between Moscow and Washington.

"Since 1992 American families have welcomed more than 60,000 Russian children into their homes, and it is misguided to link the fate of children to unrelated political considerations," Ventrell said. "The welfare of children is simply too important to tie to the political aspects of our relationship."